

Written Testimony  
John Fixx, Head of School at The Country School in Madison  
On behalf of  
Connecticut Association of Independent Schools  
**HB 7150, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations  
Concerning Education**  
Education Committee  
Friday, March 1, 2019

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Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and the distinguished members of the Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify on **House Bill 7150, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education**.

My name is John Fixx, I am the Head of School at The Country School in Madison and am here representing the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. CAIS opposes Section 1 of House Bill 7150.

Private schools have a long and proud history serving children and families in Connecticut. Dozens of our schools have celebrated Centennial Anniversaries and are deeply respected and appreciated in the communities in which they reside. Our fellowship includes the second oldest pre-collegiate institution in America, the Hopkins School in New Haven, which opened in 1660, 41 years before the founding of Yale.

Although our schools have a proven track record in their local neighborhoods, Connecticut's general population may not be fully aware of the many wide-ranging benefits provided **to the public** by the presence of private schools.

First, there is the stunning net cost savings to Connecticut taxpayers. According to a June 2015 U.S. Census Bureau report on per-pupil spending in the school in 2013, Connecticut (at \$16,631) ranks 5<sup>th</sup> behind New York (\$19,818), Alaska (\$18,175), the District of Columbia (\$17,953) and New Jersey (\$17,572).

The Connecticut Department of Education maintains a database of students who qualify for a free public school education but whose families choose a non-public alternative. The 2015 Nonpublic Enrollment Report (which does not include home-schooled children) identifies approximately 56,000 Connecticut residents attending private schools.

Here's the math: 56,000 students x \$16,631 equals an ANNUAL savings to Connecticut taxpayers of over \$931 million.

That figure does not include the significant capital costs (new school buildings, annual operating costs in those buildings, playing fields, equipment etc.) that

would be incurred by taxpayers if the state were to assume responsibility for the education of 56,000 additional students.

Private schools in Connecticut receive taxpayer support in only two areas: transportation to school (\$3.4 million) and support for school nurses (\$3 million).

Tax saving is merely one benefit. Among other advantages, private schools:

- **Are good neighbors**

Connecticut's independent schools routinely offer their facilities to non-profit organizations, municipalities and civic groups. Our campuses are safe, well maintained places that are often enjoyed by the public. Research done by urban planners proves that the presence of non-public schooling options in a community enhances town property values.

- **Provide good jobs**

Connecticut's private schools employ over 5,000 people in good jobs, steady jobs, jobs that enable professional and support personnel to live in and to participate in the Connecticut economy. Parents and visitors to our boarding schools stay in local hotels, shop in local stores, and eat in local restaurants.

- **Model civic responsibility**

Independent schools offer admission to children whose families can afford the tuition and to those whose families cannot. Our schools are constantly seeking ways to expand financial aid.

In addition, an overwhelming majority of independent schools are committed to robust and intentional community service outreach.

However, the lingering effects of the 2008 recession and the declining birth rate in Connecticut have impacted the ability of independent school parents to absorb higher tuitions and diminished services. Our schools are doing everything we can to hold the line on costs and to expand financial aid. If nursing services are cut back, we predict higher tuitions to cover the cost and a loss of students in some of our schools.

In order for us to continue to be a financial asset to the taxpayers of Connecticut, we need to be fully enrolled. Any loss of state support threatens our enrollment.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer this testimony. I would be glad to answer any questions.